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Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (A) — White

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THE *Fruits* OF OUR *Faith*

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From my office window, I see something very Mediterranean every day. It is a fig tree. This is the sole survivor of the trees a visitor from Israel gifted us. And there is something sweet about the fig tree (pomologists say they do have fragrant leaves), for when fruiting season comes, the warblers come to peck on their yellow green or brownish fruits. Visually sweet, too, from afar, they are green and lush the whole year round, spreading their fan-like leaves in our tropical air.

Moreover, there is something very interesting about the fig tree. It does not show its flowers when about to bear fruit. It develops an infructescence. Although commonly referred to as a fruit, the fig is actually a scion of the tree, known as a false fruit or multiple fruits in which the flowers and seeds are borne. Thus, during its fruiting season, the lush leaves diminish and more hollow-ended stems jut out for wasps to come into the hidden flowers and so lobes of figs come out of the branches.

So when Jesus sees the fig tree in leaf, he knows that it

is not yet the fruiting season. Why would he curse it? Ah, it is to emphasize the internal dynamics of development that should happen inside us. As the fig tree develops within the orifices of its stem a fertilized flower that would develop into seeds, our faith in God must bear fruit. The imagery that follows—driving out those selling and buying in the temple area, overturning the tables of the money changers, not permitting anyone to carry anything in that place—is not this highlighting what is supposed to have happened? Something should come out from the house of prayer deeper than all these money-making businesses that are just like the thick leaves of the figs that do not promise luscious fruits. The First Reading expounds this necessity: the end is near, and so we need to resolve to love one another, to care for each other, using our talents to serve each other, so that “in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 4:11).

Our actions show the true nature of our faith; our actions are testament to this great gift

of love we have experienced in Jesus. And so the curse of the fig tree is a condemnation of an Israelite community that does not show the time of the Messianic age, a selfish and care-less generation. No wonder, the offended chief priests and the scribes who have come and have heard of it are seeking a way to put Jesus to death. The Jewish leaders feared him for the people were astonished about his teachings.

Jesus’ powerful word, therefore, is addressed first to us, believers, inasmuch as he was criticizing the faith-life of the earlier covenant community. An interesting detail in the enclosure device is what Peter points out—the fig tree withered to its roots. A fig tree’s roots usually search out for water so that they can penetrate deeply into the ground. So Jesus’ word must be the source of our life: to have faith in God, and we must believe in the power of prayer. It must continue to nourish us. When we are prayerful, we also become more forgiving—an essential fruit of a true Christian community. This is one sign that we shall become a true eschatological community. An experience of forgiveness strengthens our relationships, one that makes us more rooted in a loving and forgiving God. Would this just remain a wish or like Jesus’ resolve in the temple one that is felt in our actions? We resolve to do it as well. This is our prayer. From my window, as I see the fig leaves sway with the wind, they seem to be saying, “Go, go!”

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps 33 [32]:11, 19)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

The designs of his Heart are from age to age, to rescue their souls from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—Jesus urges us to have fruitful lives. Following his teachings demand more of our loyalty to remain in him no matter how hard it is. Our loyalty lies not on how lengthy our devotionals are, but our capacity to be a witness of Jesus' very life. May we remain loyal to him in our faith and actions.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)

P—Have mercy on us, O Lord.
All—For we have sinned against you.

P—Show us, O Lord, your mercy.
All—And grant us your salvation.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All—Amen.

P—Lord, have mercy.
All—Lord, have mercy.
P—Christ, have mercy.
All—Christ, have mercy.
P—Lord, have mercy.
All—Lord, have mercy.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*
Clothe us, Lord God, with the virtues of the Heart of your Son and set us aflame with his love, that, conformed to his image, we may merit a share in eternal redemption.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns

with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading

(Sir 44:1, 9–13) *(Sit)*

The Prophet Ezekiel tells us that the Lord delights not in the death of the wicked but in his wholehearted conversion. Those who strive to remain in the state of grace will surely live and not die.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

NOW will I praise those godly men, our ancestors, each in his own time. But of others there is no memory, for when they ceased, they ceased. And they are as though they had not lived, they and their children after them. Yet these also were godly men whose virtues have not been forgotten. Their wealth remains in their families, their heritage with their descendants. Through God's covenant with them their family endures, their posterity, for their sake.

And for all time their progeny will endure, their glory will never be blotted out.

—The word of the Lord.
All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 149)

R—The Lord takes delight in his people.

1. Sing to the LORD a new song of praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in their maker, let the children of Zion rejoice in their king. **(R)**

2. Let them praise his name in the festive dance, let them sing praise to him with timbrel and harp. For the LORD loves his people, and he adorns the lowly with victory. **(R)**

3. Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy upon their couches; Let the high praises of God be in their throats. This is the glory of all his faithful. Alleluia. **(R)**

Verse before the Gospel

(Cf. Jn 15:16) *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. I chose you from the world, to go and bear fruit that will last, says the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mk 11:11–26)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS entered Jerusalem and went into the temple area. He looked around at everything and, since it was already late, went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany he was hungry. Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the time for figs. And he said to it in reply, "May no one ever eat of your fruit again!" And his disciples heard it.

They came to Jerusalem, and on entering the temple area he began to drive out those selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. He did not permit anyone to carry anything through the temple area. Then he taught them saying, "Is it not written: *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples? But you have made it a den of thieves.*"

The chief priests and the scribes came to hear of it and were seeking a way to put him to death, yet they feared him because the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city.

Early in the morning, as they were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered to its roots. Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." Jesus said to them in reply, "Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and

does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions."

—The Gospel of the Lord.

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily *(Sit)*

Prayer of the Faithful

P—The barren fig tree that withered symbolizes the religious leaders who made God's house of prayer a den of thieves. Let us pray that we may bear fruits of goodness so that our offering may be acceptable to God. For every petition we say:

R—Lord, hear our prayer.

C—Inspire our religious leaders to place mercy and love at the center of the Church's worship and life in accord with the word of the Lord, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." We pray: **(R)**

C—May priests see to it that our churches are truly a house of prayer through beatiful liturgies, cleanliness and order, and welcoming Church organizations. We pray: **(R)**

C—When we stand and pray, may we forgive one another so that you may forgive us our transgressions, O Father. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we not become withered fig trees because of jealousy, violence, and idolatry of money which is the root of all evil. We pray: **(R)**

C—When we give an account at the end of our days, may we present to you, O God, the fruits of a well-spent life. We pray: **(R)**

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community

and our personal intentions *(pause)*. We pray: **(R)**

P—Almighty Father, you have given us graces that we may bear abundant fruits. May we not neglect them but use them wisely so that we will have the joy of the harvest here on earth and in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts
(Stand)

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—O God, Father of mercies, who, because of the great love with which you loved us, with untold goodness gave us your Only Begotten Son, grant, we pray, that, being perfectly united with him, we may offer you worthy homage.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

Preface *(The boundless charity of Christ)*

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

P—Lift up your hearts.

All—We lift them up to the Lord.

P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For raised up high on the Cross, he gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out Blood and water from his pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open Heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation. And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy... (Kneel)

Acclamation *(Stand)*

All—Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...

P—Deliver us, Lord...

All—For the kingdom...

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)

P—Behold the Lamb of God...

All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon *(Jn 19:34)*

One of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and at once there came forth blood and water.

Prayer after Communion
(Stand)

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Made partakers in your Sacrament of charity, we humbly implore your mercy, Lord, that we may be conformed to Christ on earth and merit to be coheirs of his glory in heaven.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P—Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

Be gracious to your people, O Lord, and do not withhold consolation on earth from those you call to strive for heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (+) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—Go forth the Mass is ended.

All—Thanks be to God.



PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART *of Jesus*

Divine Jesus, you have said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," behold me kneeling at your feet, filled with a lively faith and confidence in the promises dictated by your Sacred Heart and pronounced by your adorable lips. I come to ask this favor: *(Here silently mention your petitions).*

To whom can I turn to if not to you whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits? Where should I seek if not in the treasure which contains all the riches of your kindness and mercy? Where should I knock if not at the door through which God gives himself to us and through which we go to God? I have recourse to you, Heart of Jesus. In you I find consolation when afflicted,

protection when persecuted, strength when burdened with trials, and light in doubt and darkness.

Dear Jesus, I firmly believe that you can grant me the grace I implore, even though it should require a miracle. You have only to will it, and my prayer will be granted. I admit that I am most unworthy of your favors, but this is not a reason for me to be discouraged. You are the God of mercy and you will not refuse a contrite heart. Cast upon me a look of mercy, I beg of you, and your kind Heart will find in my miseries and weaknesses a reason for granting my prayers.

O Sacred Heart, whatever may be your decision with regard to my request, I will never stop adoring, loving, praising and serving you. My Jesus, be pleased to accept this my act of perfect resignation to the decrees of your adorable Heart which I sincerely desire may be fulfilled in and by me and all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity for those who are suffering or in distress. Look upon me, I beg of you, dear Jesus, and grant me the grace for which I humbly implore you through the Immaculate Heart of your most sorrowful Mother. You have entrusted me to her as her child, and her prayers are all-powerful with you. Amen.

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